

BUILDING YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



Growing up brings additional challenges for our children, so it is really important that we help them to feel confident and build their self-esteem. Feeling comfortable with who they are, knowing that their views matter, and feeling valued by those around them can help children to grow into happy adults. This fact sheet will give you some tips on how you can build your child's self esteem, as well as giving you links to other organisations where you can find more detailed information and support.

What is self-esteem?

Having good self-esteem means feeling comfortable with who you are as a person – liking who you are and being happy with the choices you make. Good self-esteem allows us to value the positive things about ourselves while being realistic about our limitations. It helps us to feel confident, that our feelings and opinions are valued and respected by other people, and that our lives are worthwhile and fulfilling. Having good self-esteem also allows us to take problems in our stride, so that one setback does not mean that we feel like failures in other areas of our lives.

Building self-esteem

There are many ways that you can help to build your child's self-esteem. Here are some of the things that will help them to feel good about themselves:

- Celebrate successes, no matter how small and make sure your child knows how proud you are of everything they have achieved. Remember to praise their efforts, even if things aren't successful.
- Praise them every day – even something as simple as congratulating them for making a good choice will make them feel good about themselves.
- Remind your child of the fact that everyone is different and that this is OK. It can be really helpful to find positive role models for your child to relate to. Look out for news articles and photos that you can share with them.
- If things go wrong, remind your child of all the things that they do well, and reassure them that it is okay to make mistakes and that each mistake people make helps them to do better next time.
- Take time to listen to your child and value their opinions, even if they are different to your own. Allowing your child to practise voicing their opinion in the home environment will give them the confidence to speak up at school, or in meetings with professionals.
- Help your child to make their own decisions. Start when they are young, with simple choices, such as which top to wear. If they find it tricky, you can narrow down the options for them: "do you want to wear the blue one or the red one?"
- As your child gets older, encourage them to experiment with clothes and their hair – helping them to develop their own identity by trying out different looks and building their own style can also boost confidence.
- Teach your young person to be assertive with others. Give them the confidence to deal with people who ask them questions about their disability that they may not want to answer. For example, tell them that it is okay to change the subject if they do not feel comfortable.
- Encourage your child to try new clubs and activities – taking part in things that they enjoy and are good



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at really helps to build confidence and self-esteem. It's also good for practicing social skills, which again is great for self-esteem.

- Teach your child life skills – this could be anything from deciding what's for dinner to watering plants or even helping you to plan a journey. Each skill they have will boost their confidence and their independence.

Ask about

- For information about local clubs and activities to try, refer to our handbooks *Making Sense of It All* and *Making Sense of Adult Life*, both of which contain directories of organisations and leisure activities running in West Sussex.
- **Core Assets** – provides short breaks for children and young people via a one-to-one buddy to help them access local opportunities. Tel: **01903 753948** or email: **conor.chong@coreassets.com**.
- **Short Breaks for Disabled Children** – commissions holiday clubs, after school clubs, buddy schemes and short breaks at home or in the community. Also publishes a directory of activities it funds. Tel: **0330 222 2562** or email: **short.break.team@westsussex.gov.uk**.
- **Other groups include** – Ashdown Club, Worthing: **01903 528607**; Kangaroos, Haywards Heath: **01444 459108**; PACSO, Chichester: **01243 533353**; Scope Inclusion South East: **01273 695675**; Springboard Project, Crawley: **01293 531963**, Horsham: **01403 218888**.

Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** – our handy parent/carer guide contains directories of local activities and short breaks and much more. It is available to download or buy. For further information, visit our website: **www.reachingfamilies.org.uk**.
- **Contact a Family** – **www.cafamily.org.uk** or tel: **0808 808 3555** has many information leaflets, which cover topics such as growing up, relationships, and building self-esteem.
- **Jessica Kingsley Publishing** – produces many books for children and young adults covering a variety of topics around growing up with a disability, such as *Being Me and Loving It* which has been written to help children develop good self-esteem and confidence. For more information go to: **www.jkp.com**.
- **Scope** – also has information for young people to help with building confidence and self-esteem. Go to: **www.scope.org.uk**, call their helpline on: **0808 800 3333** or email: **helpline@scope.org.uk**.

